

THE 1487
BROTHERLY AGREEMENT
AND
DECLARATION
TOUCHING
THE RULES AND ORDERS
OF
The Brethren's Congregation

AT
L O N D O N

PRINTED in the YEAR MDCC LXXVI

THE
BROTHERLY AGREEMENT
AND
DECLARATION
OF
PRINCIPLES
THE RULES AND ORDERS



The British
Congregation

AT

L O N D O N

Printed by the British Museum

INTRODUCTION.

WHEREAS it hath pleased God to bring us together by the ministry of the Unitas Fratrum, we look upon it as necessary to our well-being, and useful to our successors, to agree upon and commit to writing certain principles and regulations, which we believe should be constantly attended to, if the aim of our being together shall be obtained.

THE aim of our uniting together is, that we might enjoy true fellowship of the faith in brotherly love and simplicity of heart, under the direction of the only head of our church, Christ Jesus, and the gracious leading of the Holy Spirit; and that we might thus lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty, under the protection of our most gracious sovereign.

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IN the year 1737, and in the following years, many souls were awakened to a sense of their lost and undone condition by nature, and to a deep concern about their salvation ; thus they gladly received the blessed word of reconciliation by the blood of Christ, which was brought to them by the brethren. As a natural consequence of the work of the Holy Ghost upon their hearts, they soon wished to be formed into societies ; this the brethren assisted them in. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which has been bestowed upon us by this means, has not been in vain ; though we blush at the remembrance of our great backwardness and unworthiness.

THESE societies were not originally intended to separate any from the Church of England, or any other christian religious denomination ; but to be aiding in the edification of each other, and to render the members thereof a salt and leaven in their respective religions.

WE must here observe, that the Unitas Fratrum, or Unity of the Brethren, do not, and will not, separate themselves from any child of God in any denomination of christians. And, instead of seeking to draw souls out of the other protestant churches, which the good providence of God has established in christendom, they ardently wish to preserve the children of God in their mother

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ther churches as a blessing to others, and an honour to the precious name of Jesus; therefore the members of the brethren's congregation, who are members of the Church of England, and other christian denominations, do not look upon themselves necessarily as deserters or dissenters from the church in which they were born, but are united, and have entered into a congregation relation, that they may answer the call of the Lord to their hearts, viz. to unite for mutual edification among themselves, and for the furtherance of the work of God among christians and heathens, without sectarian pride and narrow-hearted bigotry. Thus, seeking to make proselytes to their congregation would be looked upon, not only as an useless, but as an hurtful work. But they look upon it as an inestimable blessing and privilege, to be instrumental in the conversion of souls to Jesus, who has bought us by his precious blood.

BUT sundry persons in the societies, which the brethren had taken under their care, having partly before their entrance into the society broken off all connexion with their former religion, and partly believing they had a divine call to enter into the covenant of the brethren, and to become members of the brethren's congregation, that they might answer more fully the aim of their Creator and Redeemer, respecting their individuals,

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than could be done in any other manner, requested that the brethren would settle them into a congregation. This their repeated request was at length gratified, and this congregation was accordingly settled in the year 1742, and obtained its constitution as a Brethren's Congregation belonging to the Antient Protestant Episcopal Church, known by the name of Unitas Fratrum. It has therefore the same doctrine, discipline, rites and privileges with the said church.

HE, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the foundation upon which the congregation has built itself from the beginning. He alone has brought us together, and is and must remain our sole bond of union. Blessed be his name, He has preserved us upon himself, the only rock, and has given unto us endless proofs of his forbearance, mercy, faithfulness and love, that we have been graciously led by the Holy Ghost, and have experienced the care and protection of our Father in heaven!

THANKFULNESS to our gracious Lord requires, that we shew all watchfulness, and take every possible step, which can further his purpose, and to prevent whatever might in any wise obstruct his views with this congregation.

ON account of human weakness and imperfection, it is absolutely needful, to the attaining of this end, that

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we establish such regulations, as are according to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, suited and applicable to the nature of such a congregation, for the preservation and edification of the whole and of each individual member.

MANY of the Brethren's Congregation have this peculiarity, to which they have been led by the all-wise hand of God, that they dwell alone; and thus many villages of the Lord have been built in sundry parts of the earth, where brethren dwell together in unity, are freed from many seductions of the world, and the rising generation is preserved from the too powerful influence of wicked example. These villages are intended to be schools of the Holy Ghost, and have proved seminaries, in which many have been trained up for the service of the Lord among christians and heathens. But others, as is our case, being bound by a variety of circumstances, and the special call of our Lord, are scattered in cities, towns and districts; and yet feeling an irresistible call to join in the closest manner with the Brethren's Congregation, have thought it needful to receive, and solemnly agree to hold and observe, all the fundamental principles and regulations, as held by the aforesaid villages of the Lord. Yea, we look upon it as more needful for us, in our circumstances, to have a

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clear idea of, and to agree upon the strict observance of the principles and regulations of the brethren's Congregations, than even those who dwell in congregation places.

BESIDE, the general principles received and inculcated in the Brethren's Congregations agreeable to the word of God, and beside the statutes formerly drawn up in the words of the Holy Scriptures, which have been received in this and other English congregations, as a rule of practice among us; it has been thought expedient to draw up and agree upon our general principles and rule of conduct in a plain and simple manner, that we may have them always in remembrance;

THEREFORE we have agreed upon the following points:

I. The

THE Brotherly Agreement, &c.

I. *The Relation in which the Congregation stands to other Religions.*

I. **T**HE Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are and shall remain the only rule and standard both of our doctrine and practice, and we have, in common with the rest of the brethren's congregations, approved of the doctrines of the confession of * Augsburg, for no other reason, but because we look upon it as a sound confession of faith, consonant to the Holy Scriptures ; In short, we acknowledge no doctrine as the doctrine of our congregation, nor subscribe thereto, which is not conformable to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles.

WE look upon every truth contained in the Holy Scriptures as an inestimable treasure, and would rather

* The Augsburg or Augustan confession, as drawn up by the Protestant divines and presented by the Protestant princes at the dyet of the empire, in the year of our Lord 1530, was used by the English reformers as the ground-work of the thirty-nine articles of the church of England, which were compiled 1562 ; and these two confessions agree in the essential doctrinal articles.

lose our lives and property, than deny any of them. And we cannot but look upon the denial of any divine truth, were it even with a view of obtaining some good end by so doing, as a great crime.

WE will therefore be watchful, and use all diligence, that both the doctrine taught among us, and the whole practice of the congregation, be conformable to the doctrine and practice of our Lord, and his apostles ; and to this end we humbly implore the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

2. WE look upon it as an essential character of a congregation of Christ, that the word of God be preached in it in purity and sincerity, and that the congregation and the members thereof walk agreeable thereunto, in holiness, as becometh the children of God.

WE therefore acknowledge every one to be a true brother, or, fellow member of the body of Christ, that is born of God through the Holy Ghost.

Now whereas this character cannot be confined to any external religious constitution, therefore it is our desire to live in love and harmony with every one, in every christian denomination whatsoever, of whom it is evident that the Holy Ghost has called him by the gospel, and enlightened him by his gifts, sanctifying and preserving him in the true and living faith.

WE abhor all envy and hatred springing from the difference of religious constitutions, as utterly repug-

nant to the mind of Christ; and as we will unfeignedly love and own as our brethren all children of God, viz. such who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, let them belong to whatever religious denomination they may; we will not interfere in any altercations and disputes about religion, but abide by the plain and uncontrovertible fundamental truths of holy writ, making our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and his all-sufficient merits, the principal subject of our conversation with people of all denominations.

3. As the unity of faith does not necessarily imply an uniformity in the liturgy, ritual, and ceremonies; and as the communion of faith ought not to be dissolved on account of any such disparity; therefore we will not, at any time, in our congregations look upon ceremonies and rites, and the external mode of the liturgy, however harmless or good they may be in themselves, as being absolutely above amendment; nor will we ever confound things appertaining to the external mode of worship with the essence and reality of our fellowship.

We can hold nothing among us as absolutely necessary, except such things as belong to the very essence, life and being of the church of Christ in general.

To that which is essential belongeth the unity of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of love and of hope, and the union of the members of the congregation in one body, of which Christ is the head. The abiding in the doctrine of

Jesus and his apostles, the maintaining the instructions of our Lord, and the following his example, are inseparably connected therewith. These, as belonging to the very essence of a congregation, can and must never be superseded in our congregation; nor must any alteration be made therein at any time. We will rather implore the Lord incessantly to cause us to abound herein, and to make us more and more conformable to his will by his Holy Spirit.

ON the other hand, whatever relates only to external good order in the mode of worship, and the various regulations in the congregation, and is not to be deemed essentially necessary or unalterable, such regulations may be altered according to circumstances; yet, as long as they are means to promote a godly life and conversation, they are valuable, and ought to be conscientiously maintained: But when the above-mentioned end is no longer to be obtained by them, they ought to be altered, lest they be kept up merely for custom's sake, in which case they might rather become an hindrance to the work of the Holy Ghost, which must never be restrained, and might prevent the worship of God in Spirit and in Truth.

WE do therefore adopt, with the ancient brethren's church, that fundamental principle, that we will, from time to time, endeavour to amend whatever relates either to the method of teaching, or to such regulations as are made for promoting the chief aim of a congregation of Christ, and seek to become more conformable to the holy scriptures therein.

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IN short, we will not retain any regulation, when we are convinced that it can be altered for the better, and to the blessing of the congregation; neither will we lay aside any, as long as it is evidently wholesome and useful for promoting a godly life and conversation.

4. WE will pray the Lord of the harvest to send us always faithful labourers, and to prevent any ministers or teachers being appointed among us, who teach not sound doctrine; and we will watch over it that no books be introduced among us, particularly such as are intended for the instruction of our youth, which are not conformable to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles.

ALTHOUGH it is our chief concern to experience the blessings, and to receive more and more the signature of a congregation and people of Christ; yet we will not lose sight of that call of grace, which we have received in common with all the rest of the brethren's congregations, viz. to propagate the gospel all over the world, and particularly among the heathen, and to be subservient to the execution of our Lord's testament, John xvii. We look upon this call as inseparably connected with that election of grace, which has brought us together. But, in order that the spirit of readiness to serve his will in all things may increase daily among us, we will be watchful that neither time, nor circumstances, nor personal influence, nor anything else, may cause us to deviate from an entire devotedness of heart to our Saviour and to his work.

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WE will therefore bear constantly in mind, how our Saviour has made use of our brethren for the propagation of the gospel in the world; and how he has, and still does, through grace, make use of many in the brethren's congregations, now established in the world, to this great end; and how our Lord has collected many brethren's congregations in various countries, who have received the like precious faith with us, and who enjoy the same grace and pasture on the merits of our Lord; all which congregations are now in the true unity of the faith, united in one œconomy of grace and love, which is called the *Unitas Fratrum*, or United Brethren.

THIS union and communion, which our dear Lord and Saviour prayed for in his high-priestly prayer, John xvii. we esteem as an inestimable privilege, hold it sacred, and will, in conjunction with all our brethren, do our utmost to promote the propagation of the gospel in the world.

II. *The Foundation and Rule of the Congregation Constitution.*

I. THE unaffected imitation of Jesus and his apostles, in lowliness and poverty, is an essential characteristic of a congregation of Christ.

WE will therefore pray for and seek, through his grace, invariably to preserve this as our proper character, not in word only, but in all our regulations, undertakings and transactions, yea in our whole manner
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of life, and carefully guard against any thing opposite thereto, although the method of being led into another path should appear ever so plausible. For the kingdom of God is not of this world, and we are convinced, that his power in making us answer the purposes of his calling, both in and through us, can be more gloriously displayed in lowliness and poverty, than if we were ever so highly esteemed.

We will carefully watch, lest by degrees well-meant customs should be introduced into the congregation, which are contrary to this essential characteristic; and lest under the specious pretence of rendering things more easy and convenient to the members of the congregation, any regulations be abolished and superseded, which are agreeable to the said character, and calculated to render us more conformable thereto. We will never forget, that we, like all our congregations, are a people of whom it may be truly said, "We have here no abiding city, but we seek that which is to come." Thus minded, we can alone be preserved from becoming like unto stagnated water, or sinking into a slothful, lukewarm, Laodicean state.

2. THE primary view of all congregation regulations must refer to the human heart, and they are so calculated, that the labour upon the souls, both on the side of those who are intrusted with the care of souls, and of those who are cared for, may be facilitated, that all evil be prevented in the congregation from the beginning, and that all things, which may give rise to the
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commission of sin, be as much as possible removed out of the way.

HENCE, at the same time that external rules and regulations are established in the congregation, we must of necessity be principally concerned, that a vital knowledge of Jesus Christ, to the furtherance of a godly life and conversation, be implanted into the hearts of the congregation members. This being the case, it will appear evident to all, how expedient and salutary it is, that good discipline and order be established, and what a detriment it would be, if it were otherwise; but from hence it follows also, that whoever desires to be a member of the congregation, must, of his own free will, agree to all such regulations and orders as may be found necessary to be established, and that every regulation has the public consent. For, as we can compel no one to follow our rules (and if we could, we would not) so whoever has not a mind disposed to observe such rules, should not desire to stay among us. Such rules and statutes must be conformable to the doctrine of our Saviour and his apostles, and tend to the real well-being of the members of the congregation, so that no true member that is ascertained of his calling, may find reason to hesitate to follow them. But after such rules be once agreed upon by the congregation, they are then sacredly to be kept by all the members of it, as well as by the labourers and servants of the congregation, and that without any difference or respect of persons.

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3. AND whereas a congregation cannot subsist as an house of God, and proceed according to the rules and regulations which they themselves have agreed to, unless persons are appointed to have the inspection and direction of the whole, to maintain such regulations, and to be watchful that they are attended to and followed ; therefore we have always had, and will have, such an institution among us, in whose hands the general direction and superintendency are placed.

THE congregation is properly ruled by those principles and statutes which they themselves have received and established, with this view alone, that harmony and unanimity may be promoted and maintained. But the object of the attention of the labourers and servants in their conferences is properly, the obviating, on the one hand, all mistakes and misapprehensions; and on the other, the preventing all partiality and distinction of persons, that the said principles may rule without obstruction and controul.

4. ALL conferences and offices are intended for the great end of advancing the prosperity of the congregation ; and therefore all and each of them must be supported and respected, whether much or little is committed to them. At the same time, that established and approved rule should be strictly attended to, that one conference does not interfere with and incroach upon the other, and especially that the Elder's conference do not take into consideration, decide and determine in things, which ought previously to be considered in other conferences ; and that the offices in the congregation

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gation go on each in due order, so that one may not interfere in the business of another.

5. WE have committed to the Elder's Conference the general direction of the internal and external concerns of the congregation, and we consider them as a watch, appointed with a view that they should see to it, that all the other conferences may be established according to our rule, and then continue in the unobstructed discharge of their offices, and that the congregation regulations be every way duly observed.

WE likewise expect of the Elder's conference, and look upon it as one of their principal incumbencies, that they, with all possible carefulness, trace out the thoughts of peace of our Lord concerning each member of the congregation, and its destination, diligently taking heed, lest the views of our Lord concerning any one soul be neglected through our fault; so that each brother and sister in the congregation may be well assured, that their course and circumstances are from time to time, and with concern, taken into consideration in the presence of the Lord.

6. IN order to facilitate the attaining of this grand aim, there is, beside the above-mentioned direction, another conference appointed, consisting of the helpers of the several choirs in the congregation, which has the particular care of souls for its object, and is called the Choir Helper's Conference. But their deliberations and proposals are always to be referred to the Elder's Conference for decision.

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7. FURTHERMORE, according to the apostle's rule :
 "Is there not a wise man among you, &c." 1 Cor. vi. 5.
 the congregation has chosen men of understanding,
 who in conjunction with the labourers are, with a fatherly
 care, to advise and assist the members of the congregation
 in their various circumstances ; these are subordinate
 to the Elder's conference, and are to care for the ex-
 pences and all the external affairs of the congregation.
 And should disputes arise, they are to act the part of
 arbitrators, and judge between brother and brother. In
 general, they are to advance the welfare of the congre-
 gation according to their best ability, preventing and
 averting hurt, as far as a faithful vigilance and willing
 assistance can contribute thereto. And this is the proper
 view and just idea of that conference which is called
 among us the Committee.

8. THERE is likewise appointed a Large Helper's Con-
 ference, consisting of the members of the Elder's Confe-
 rence, the committee, and other members of the con-
 gregation, chosen and confirmed thereto, who are well
 acquainted with the rules and course of the congregation,
 enjoy the confidence of their fellow members, and are
 endowed with grace and gifts to assist with good coun-
 sel : This conference has the course of the congregation
 and all occurrences therein for the object of their deli-
 beration, and to prepare matters partly for the congre-
 gation-council, partly for the committee, and partly for
 the Elder's Conference.

9. THE congregation council, or vestry, consisting of
 the members of the foregoing conferences, and a certain

number of communicants, chosen by the rest of the communicants, and confirmed in the Elder's Conference. This conference is to consult about all such matters as concern and interest the whole congregation. In matters of this nature nothing can be finally resolved nor established by the other conferences, without the consent of the congregation council. The things which concern the whole congregation are of the following kind: The introducing of new congregation rules and orders, or making alterations in those introduced already, or the bringing any considerable expence upon the congregation, and so forth.

EACH member of the congregation council has not only a free vote, and a right to declare his opinion to the best of his knowledge, freely and without any scruple, according to the method adopted by the congregation council itself; but is, as a member of the body, bound thereto, and that so much the more, as it is expected of each member, according to the duty incumbent upon a brother, that he has the well-being of the congregation at heart in his degree, and be subservient to the advancement thereof according to his ability.

WHOSOEVER does not speak his mind in the congregation council, but maketh exceptions against matters proposed therein afterwards, and in other places, acts against honesty and conscience. Whoever has good advice to give, but withholdeth it out of self-interest, respect of persons, fear of man, or any other view, sinneth against the mind of Christ.

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If any should scruple to utter his thoughts in the congregation council, he is at liberty to do it privately to the congregation helper, to the congregation servant, or any other labourer. And lest any member of the congregation council should be deprived of an opportunity of communicating his observations; there shall be allowed, in matters of weight, a time, not exceeding eight days, after the meeting of the council, in which the matter is proposed; and at the next ensuing meeting of the congregation council, any observation that has been made shall be laid before the congregation council. And if any one chuses rather to utter his thoughts upon the subject by writing, than by speaking, he may send in his written thoughts upon the subject; but he is to sign his name to his declaration, and at this meeting the affair may be concluded. But this rule of allowing eight days is only to be in matters of weight, and not in common and usual cases.

WHOEVER is a member of the congregation council, being intrusted by his fellow-members with the care of the affairs of the congregation in the articles specified above, cannot look upon himself as dispensed from taking a share in whatever concerns the whole. Whoever therefore stays away from the congregation council out of indifferency, or any other principle, and without necessity, acts inconsistent with the character of a member of the council, yea of the congregation itself.

As the Elder's Conference and committee will, in such cases as mentioned above, do nothing without the concurrence

currence of the congregation council ; so the whole congregation having impowered the council to act for them, every member engages to acquiesce and to assist in the execution of their resolutions ; and in the congregation council, resolutions are taken by the majority of votes.

10. The following officers are required in the congregation, viz.

THE Congregation-helper; whose office it is, in conjunction with the Elder's Conference, to bear the concern of the whole congregation upon his heart, to have a particular watchful eye over the continuance and furtherance of the internal course of grace, to maintain all congregation regulations with discretion and judgment, and to assist the choirs in all their inward, outward, or personal concerns, with help and advice. He is the first person in the Elder's Conference, and it is expected of him, that he should keep the whole together.

THE Minister of the congregation, whose office it is to labour in the word and doctrine.

THE Choir-helpers of both sexes, viz. of the married choir ; of the choirs of the widowers and widows ; and of the single brethren and single sisters choirs.

THE Congregation-servant, or Warden : or if circumstances will not allow that a particular brother is placed in that office, this office is to be supplied by the committee.

THE chief persons in the schools.

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THE committee. To the committee belong by virtue of their office all the brethren of the Elder's Conference.

THE Large Helper's Conference : to which, by virtue of their office, belong all the members of the Elder's Conference, and of the committee.

THE Almoner, or the conference which takes care of the poor.

THE physician.

THE servant in the hall or chapel.

II. In supplying the office of minister, and of choir helpers, as well as the other congregation offices, a choice ought always to be made of such persons who are not only esteemed true congregation members, but who, according to the nature of their offices, are also endowed with the needful knowledge and other graces and gifts requisite thereunto, and upon whom the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the congregation resteth.

Now whereas these qualifications may be met with, not only in persons who have applied themselves to study in academies and universities in the usual course, but also in such who have not frequented universities. And whereas our dear Lord himself did call unlearned men for his fore-ordained witnesses and apostles, therefore we deem it a laudable custom, and agreeable to the apostolic practice, that the offices in the congregation, and

and particularly also the ministry of the gospel, be supplied by brethren endued with gifts and grace, be they scholars, so called, or not.

12. WHEREAS it is of the utmost consequence that the offices in the congregation be supplied with persons endued with the gifts of grace, and the spirit requisite thereto, being also approved in the hearts of the congregation members; and whereas it ought to lie with weight upon our hearts, that the execution of God's counsel of grace concerning the congregation be at all times our principal point of view herein, and that all human by-views and mistakes, and more particularly all insincerity and unjustifiable self-will be prevented in matters of such great moment: therefore we do hereby, once for all, empower and authorize the Elder's Conference to care for it, that all the congregation offices be from time to time, and conformable to the constitution of the brethren's congregation, duly and properly supplied. And as we would not be left to our own choice touching the persons proposed for such offices, but depend solely upon the direction of our Lord; therefore in all such cases it shall be decided by the lot whom the Lord has chosen for the supplying of any of these offices.

13. THE committee and the Large Helper's Conference are to be formed in the following manner: First, of such who are members of it by virtue of their office: Then each member of the congregation council shall vote for such a number of brethren as are to be appointed members thereof: The votes being collected, the Elder's Conference is to take all those who have been
voted

voted for into the Lot, according to the majority of votes ; unless there should be some material objection to any of them. And thus, those who are appointed by Lot, shall be declared duly elected, and take their places accordingly.

14. WE look upon the division of the several choirs, which human nature and circumstances naturally form, as belonging essentially to congregation order.

THE great aim of every choir-division is, that each may, according to the modification arising from age, sex, or circumstances, experience for spirit, soul, and body, the power of being clothed on with Christ, which grace is superior to all other knowledge, and effects more than all the methods prescribed by human wisdom ; and that every soul may obtain an evangelical knowledge of Christ and of herself, and may encrease in the enjoyment of all the merits of the life, sufferings, and death of Jesus.

THIS has given rise to the institution among us, that each of the single choirs dwell together, separate from the other choirs in the place congregations, and where the circumstances will admit. This institution does in no wise spring from any civil or temporal views, but is intended solely and alone for the furtherance of the inward course of grace in every individual, that the souls may be more effectually cared for, and that the necessary outward good order may be maintained.

III. *Concerning the Relation in which the Congregation stands to the Magistrates.*

1. WHEREAS the Holy Scriptures expressly command us to be subject unto the higher powers, and to all who have authority over us, because, being ordained of God, they are the ministers of God to us for good ; therefore we will approve ourselves in all things as loyal subjects, sacredly and religiously submitting ourselves to the laws and constitution of the realm. And whoever shall act knowingly contrary thereto, shall forfeit his or her place among us.

WE look upon ourselves as bound in duty not only to love and honour our gracious Sovereign, and all put in authority under him ; but also to do all that is in our power to contribute to the prosperity of the land in general, and not to allow our own private interest to sway us from our duty as subjects, or seduce us to seek our own advantage to the detriment of government. And we will submit to the laws of our country and to the ordinances of men, for Christ's sake.

2. BUT if an instance should occur among us, which may God in mercy prevent, that any one shall be deemed guilty of a criminal action, which lays him open to the law, such a person is thereby excluded from our congregation, and will be worthy of double chastisement, as knowing his master's will, and not doing it.

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IV. *Concerning the Relation between the Congregation and its Servants.*

1. THE congregation and its labourers and servants constitute *one* body, and are absolutely inseparable one from the other. They have but *one* and the same interest that all things be conducted honestly, decently and in love, to the promoting of the congregation's prosperity, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

WHATEVER may appear as a different interest, or have a tendency to hurt the mutual confidence between the congregation and its labourers and servants, ought to be abhorred, carefully avoided, and must be banished from among us.

2. No one can be a labourer and servant of the congregation, if he is not approved to the hearts of the congregation; and the very name, labourer and servant, conveys an idea of their obligation to the congregation. And on account of such obligation, it ought, at all times, to be their unfeigned concern, not only to stand in an uninterrupted fellowship with our Saviour, touching their own hearts, but also to crave from Him the gifts of grace requisite for their calling, that they may not act merely by their own reason and strength, or according to the dictates of mere human wisdom, but being led by the Holy Ghost, they may act in their offices agreeable to the mind of Christ. They ought not to seek their own, but what is the Lord's. They are not to assume dominion, or to lord it over the rest

of the congregation members ; but are to be helpers of their joy, to be instant in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke, exhort and comfort their fellow members as occasion may require, with all long suffering and doctrine. 2 Tim. iv. 2. And the congregation also, with all her members, is bound to weigh and to fulfill the following request or admonition of the apostle :

“ WE beseech you, brethren, to know them which
 “ labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and
 “ admonish you ; and esteem them very highly in love
 “ for their work’s sake, and be in peace among your-
 “ selves.” 1 Theff. v. 12, 13. Agreeable therefore to
 the exhortation of the same apostle, we will obey our
 teachers and labourers, who have the rule over us, and
 submit ourselves ; for they watch for our souls, as they
 that must give account, that they may do it with joy,
 and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable to us.
 Heb. xiii. 17. We will pray for them with all ear-
 nestness.

3. WE will never appoint a person to an office in the congregation, merely in consideration of his natural talents and gifts, for this would be a deviation from the practice of the apostles ; but we will principally attend to the internal call of grace and gifts of the Spirit.

4. No labourer and servant of the congregation shall
 incroach on the office of the other, nor obstruct the
 discharge thereof ; but each ought to love and honour

the other, and render the execution of his office as easy as he possibly can.

5. SINCE each brother in the congregation, according to his degree and measure, justly bears a joint concern for the prosperity of the congregation, and the work of the Lord in general, and is both entitled and bound in conscience to utter his thoughts on this head ; because each member of the body has a fellow-feeling of the weal and woe of the whole ; therefore each labourer and servant ought willingly to lend an ear, and pay a due regard to all modest and brotherly observations and admonitions of the congregation members.

6. CONGREGATION labourers and servants, capable of carrying on handicraft businesses, ought, according to the apostolic, and ancients, custom in the brethren's congregations, not to be ashamed thereof, nor lay them aside ; but they should make as much use of them as possible for the earning of their own maintenance, except their service in the congregation should take up all their time.

ON the other hand, we look upon ourselves as bound in duty, faithfully to provide for the maintenance of those of our labourers and servants, and their families, who cannot maintain themselves either wholly or in part, lest any of them should want for necessities.

7. As no brother can discharge any office committed to him in the congregation to the benefit of the whole any longer than the Lord granteth unto him the
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grace requisite thereto, and the confidence of the congregation ; therefore all labourers and servants, in case they should lose their grace and gift, and that the confidence and blessing of the congregation should be withdrawn from them in their offices, should gladly resign their offices, and return to the state of other private congregation members.

V. Relation of the Members of the Congregation to the Congregation itself.

I. WHEN any person desires to be received as a member of the congregation, strict enquiry is to be made into the state of heart, walk, and all other circumstances of such a person, and particularly into the motives and views of such a request. The Brotherly Agreement thus entered into must be read to such persons, and they must not only weigh it well, whether their heart and mind, after due and mature consideration, is really so disposed, that they can believe they are called by the Lord to enter into our covenant ; but the labourers are to examine the state and case of such persons thoroughly ; and as it cannot be supposed, that they are personally acquainted with all their circumstances, the labourers, if they know of no impediment, are to consult the large helper's conference ; and if in the last conference no objection should be found, they are then to mention the persons to the congregation council, and each member of the council is bound in conscience to mention to the labourers any objection which may arise in his mind, soon after the forementioned meeting of the council ; that so due enquiry

quiry may be made into the nature and ground of the objection, and the objection, if groundless, be removed before the final determination touching such persons reception. Should the helper's conference and congregation council find no objection to the proposal, then it is to be weighed and determined finally in the elder's conference, whether such persons are to be received, or not.

2. We will receive none into the congregation on account of their rank, wealth or capacity. We also establish anew that old fundamental principle among us, viz. that no one shall be received among us merely out of good hopes, unless we discover convincing evidences in him of the labour of the Holy Ghost in his heart, and of his call of grace. For since the view with our congregation neither is, nor by the grace of God, ever shall be any other, but to live together in the true union of faith, in brotherly love, and agreeable to the mind of Christ, it follows therefore, that none can be looked upon as a member of the congregation, except he has either actually received this mind by being born of God, or at least has an unfeigned desire for it. If nevertheless such persons should be found in the congregation, of whatever rank or age they may be, who have no understanding of the mystery of Christ, and who are at present incapable of enjoying the unity of the faith, nay, who perhaps have spent already a long time in a lukewarm indifference towards our Saviour, and who therefore give us just reason to doubt of their call unto the congregation, and of their prospering therein :

therein : In such cases the elder's conference is to take it into mature consideration, whether such persons are to be borne with in patience any longer, or whether it would be more expedient, even for themselves, to advise them in tender love and heartiness to leave the congregation.

3. SHOULD any be found to make the evangelical, free and generous manner of treatment in the congregation a cloke of licentiousness and maliciousness, and will not submit and keep himself within the boundaries of the congregation rules, or who gives offence, and is hurtful to other souls, he belongeth not to us, and shall, without respect of persons, be excluded from the congregation.

4. WE look upon it as one of the most important and salutary regulations in the congregation, that, for the prevention of hurt to souls, and of all loss of our glory in Christ, the separation of both sexes be maintained invariably in due order and decency.

WE therefore, as many as are house-fathers, will make it our concern to regulate our families and domestic affairs, as much as can possibly be, agreeable to this salutary purpose.

FROM a consciousness of our human depravity and sinfulness, and not because we look upon it as an high degree of holiness, we will religiously see to it, that all unnecessary private intercourse of individual persons of both sexes, from which danger and harm might accrue,
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be prudently avoided, and not connived at under any pretence whatsoever; that thus, not only all occasions to irregularities and transgressions may be cut off, but principally also, that all clandestine connexions and engagements, as well as all promises of marriage, made contrary to due order, be prevented.

If nevertheless, and notwithstanding all possible care, it should happen, that single persons of both sexes enter into any clandestine understanding and engagement one with another, and promise marriage to each other; or any other person should countenance or occasion such irregularities; then not only the single persons, who have been guilty of such irregularities, but also those, who have countenanced or occasioned the same, shall be dismissed from the congregation.

5. WE have thought it highly necessary to come to a firm agreement with each other concerning that momentous point, the education of our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and we covenant together before the Lord, that through the grace of God we will sacredly and inviolably observe the following fundamental principles and rules:

a. THE congregation members of the married choir, whom God has blessed with children, ought never to let it escape their minds, that their children are the property of Jesus, purchased and redeemed with his holy, precious blood, on which account it is incumbent upon them to bring them up for our Lord alone, and to take

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all possible care to avert from them offence and hurt. To this it is above all other considerations requisite, that the parents approve themselves as children of God, and as priests of the Lord, in their whole deportment, edifying their children by their example, and exciting them to follow them, as they follow Chr st. For this is the most effectual method to prove a blessing to the children, and the parents themselves will infallibly reap a blessing from a faithful discharge of their parental duty.

b. NEXT to this first and greatest incumbence of the parents in the education of their children, great attention is to be paid to the manner of their being trained up, and the way of living to which they are accustomed in their younger years.

OUR call to serve our Lord and Saviour, in various ways in the propagation of the gospel, and the public good, make us resolve to beware of educating our children in too delicate a manner, and of rendering them too tender in their constitutions, or leading them into the pomps and vanities of the world, by which we are surrounded.

c. WE will, if possible, knowing the seductions to which children are exposed in the present degenerate times, regulate, in our congregation, schools for the instruction and preservation of our children. In these schools they shall be instructed, not only in reading, writing and cyphering, grammar, and any other branch of knowledge, which may be found necessary ; but above all, they shall

shall be solidly instructed in the knowledge of the truth unto godliness, agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and in a manner best adapted to the heart and capacity of the children. But, should it be out of our power to establish directly such schools, we will make it a matter of conscience to take every possible measure, as it is the duty of every real christian, to preserve them from the seductions of the world, and to provide for their education in a manner consistent with the principles we find in the Bible, and with our call of grace. And we will do our utmost to assist our poor brethren and sisters in the caring for their children. But should any parent be remiss or indolent in using all his endeavours to defray the expences of his child's or children's education, he shall be looked upon as an unfaithful parent, and undeserving the assistance of the congregation.

d. IN order to render the education of the children in the congregation as easy to the parents as possible, the Elder's Conference and servants of the congregation are to assist them herein with the necessary instruction, advice and help, as also to point out to them the best methods that may be taken for the benefit of the souls of their children, for the forming their minds and conduct for the use of society, and for teaching them to act with decency, civility, and respect towards all men. And the parents ought gratefully to acknowledge and to make good use of such advice, guidance and assistance in an affair of so great consequence.

e. If, contrary to what we hope, it should happen, that children of one family cannot, without danger and hurt of souls, be suffered to live together; or, if it is judged necessary to advise that one or the other child be placed elsewhere, the parents, out of love and faithfulness towards their children, ought gladly to comply therewith.

f. As the separation of the sexes is an universally established rule, so the attention of the parents is also particularly to be directed thereto in the education of their children. To this end the parents are to be careful, that their small children be always under constant, prudent inspection, and never left quite alone, and particularly that at their dressing and undressing, in their sleeping, and on other occasions, all opportunity for hurtful curiosity and seduction be avoided.

BUT if, contrary to our hopes, there should nevertheless such parents be found in the congregation, who, notwithstanding all faithful advice and assistance, are wilfully unfaithful, negligent and careless in the education of their children, they are not only responsible for it to the Lord, whose property they and their children are, but they must blame themselves, if, on account of the blameable and hurtful education of their children, and because they have slighted the admonitions given to them, they forfeit our fellowship on this account.

6. As members of one body, of which Christ is the head, and by virtue of our being in the unity of faith, of love, and hope, which we are called unto, we think
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it our universal duty to be helpers of each other's joy, and to help in bearing the weal and woe of each other. It is therefore so much the more incumbent on each congregation member, neither to undertake nor to occasion any thing, which might be productive of hurt, detriment or reproach unto others, or unto the whole congregation. And we will have the same attention to the well-being of our fellow-men.

7. If any brother or sister in the congregation should discover any thing which may occasion hurt and detriment to souls, or from whence the loss of our glory in Christ may be apprehended, they are bound in duty neither to conceal it, nor to make it known imprudently, and in an improper place; but they are bound to make it known without delay to the Elder's Conference, either directly, or by means of their respective choir-labourers, that thus the matter may be enquired into, and all detriment prevented as much as possible.

8. As the congregation thinks it incumbent upon them, out of a principle of brotherly love, to assist all their fellow members, who, on account of old age, or sickness, or by other unavoidable causes, are rendered incapable of supporting themselves; so we will more particularly consider it as our duty to do our utmost to care for the good education of the orphan-children in the congregation, assisting them in learning suitable sciences, arts or trades, thereby enabling them, in time, to prove useful members of the community, and honestly to maintain themselves.

9. EACH

9. EACH member of the congregation, according to the apostolical rule, shall work, and eat his own bread, and no person who is wilfully idle shall be suffered among us. He that has a family, must endeavour, through industry, to maintain himself and family in an honest manner.

10. WHOEVER carelessly shall incur debts, which he is not able to pay, must not expect that the congregation will be answerable for them; this being by no means their duty. Nay, according to circumstances, such a person may forfeit his right to the congregation.

11. WE will encourage honest industry, as far as God enables us; but as the very desire to be rich is a grievous temptation, which leads men into snares, and the net of the devil, we will not encourage such desire, by lending our assistance to such, where we perceive this desire; but will carefully warn each other of this great evil.

As fellowship is our pleasure, and the consequences of the conduct of every member are either an honour or dishonour to our Lord and his people, we will not engage in new branches of business or undertakings, from whence danger might arise to ourselves, or we bring thereby a dishonour upon the cause of our Lord and Saviour, without the concurrence of the Elder's Conference and Committee.

WE abhor and detest every method of gain, which has the least fraud or appearance of injustice in it; and there-

therefore we will avoid all appearance of evil in our dealings, and act uprightly and honestly, not only in the sight of God, but also of men.

WE will therefore sell our goods at a reasonable price, and do our work faithfully, and for equitable wages.

12. ALL the members of the congregation are, and own themselves, bound to accede to all the regulations made, and measures taken, for the good of the congregation, to take share therein, and to contribute, as far as lies in their power, to raise the expences requisite thereto in due and reasonable proportion. To these belongeth, among other articles, the abovementioned maintenance of our labourers and servants, viz. as many of them as are not able to maintain themselves either wholly or in part, as likewise the expences incurred by the maintenance of our congregation regulations and good order, e. g. all that may be found necessary to keep up our chapel, house, burying-ground, and the like; and we will never be wanting from time to time to raise among us what may be requisite for such exigencies; and we will take effectual share in every thing that can promote the common good, and assist in the general necessities of our brethren, agreeable to the rule of free-willingness, which has been established among us.

13. EACH member of the congregation looks upon himself as bound to enter into such measures as may be found necessary to preserve good order and decorum in our walk and conversation, and in our houses by day and night.

14. IF

14. If any thing new is to be begun which may be for the use of, or an expence to the whole congregation, previous notice is to be given to the committee, who are then to take care, that every thing be conducted in a proper manner.

VI. Concerning the Conduct of the Congregation Members individually and towards each other.

I. WE will make it our unfeigned concern to treat each other with love, meekness and humility, each esteeming the other higher than himself, willingly serving and assisting each other. We will endeavour to shew the same mind towards our neighbours, strangers and travellers, nay towards all men, so that these inexhaustible and instructive words of our Lord: "What you will that men should do unto you, that do ye unto them," may be practically and effectually verified in us.

BUT if any one should presume to encroach upon, or to prejudice the property of another, or to molest another, from a principle of selfishness, if such a person, notwithstanding all admonition, should obstinately persist therein, he shall not be deemed a brother by us, nor suffered to continue in the congregation.

WE will, in all cases and transactions, both among ourselves and others, act with uprightness and sincerity, using no arts, and still less conforming to the manner of those, who endeavour to compass their ends by subtilty, and at the expence of their neighbours; therefore artful-

artfulness and dissimulation shall be deemed among us equally criminal with other gross sins and works of the flesh.

2. SINCE the unity of faith does in no wise destroy good order and subordination, but ought, according to the Holy Scriptures, rather to strengthen it; therefore all brethren and sisters in the congregation, which are engaged in the service of individuals or families, are never to be wanting in shewing to their superiors due faithfulness, obedience and respect, as becometh servants; but, on the contrary, their conduct herein ought to be so much the more irreprovable, because those, whom they serve, are members of the body of Christ, and brethren and sisters; but, on the other hand, it is justly expected of those brethren and sisters, who have brethren and sisters in their service, that they treat them with love and tenderness, and gratefully acknowledge their faithful service.

3. If differences should arise between superiors and inferiors, they should be soon adjusted among themselves in a brotherly manner, lest any ill-will take place in their minds.

4. As the setting aside, or even confounding different ranks and stations, is contrary to the order of God, established in human society; therefore, notwithstanding our unity in the faith, and the equality of our call of grace, the order of God, and the distinction of rank and station, shall not be set aside in the congregation. But we will however endeavour, according to the exam-

ple of sound doctrine, to let temperance, decency, modesty and frugality appear in all things, in our dress, eating and drinking, in our dwellings, furniture, &c. and through the grace of God, let luxury, vanity, and abuse of temporal goods, be removed far from us.

5. WE will in general beware of reading such books and pamphlets as may corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus, or the contents of which are unbecoming a Christian. But more particularly we will not suffer among us any books which deceitfully lead to satirical reflections upon the Holy Scriptures, or upon religion in general ; nor shall any lascivious, licentious and hurtful writings, pictures or representations, be suffered among us. And whoever introduces such among us wilfully, and, to the detriment of others, shall encourage the reading and use of them, him we will disown and dismiss as a seducer, to whom that petition in our liturgy is applicable :

“ Put far from thy people all seducers !”

6. THROUGH the grace of God we will sacredly preserve that character, inseparable from true christianity, viz. to be true, and to keep our word and good faith to every one. And if a brother should borrow of another, or of any other friends, or of any person whatsoever out of our circle, money, or the worth of money, or shall enter into any other engagement with any one, and he shall either wilfully, or even out of carelessness, neglect the promised restitution, or the fulfilment of his engagement, it shall be considered as a crime, and be treated

treated according as the circumstances, upon enquiry, shall appear, without respect of persons.

7. To carry abroad or divulge personal affairs, or news, by word of mouth, or by writing, whereby the good name and character of others is frequently injured, and other mischief done, we will not suffer among us. As we will likewise carefully beware of unseasonable or unbecoming relations or narrations, and of passing our judgment upon public and political transactions.

8. SHOULD any misunderstanding or bickerings arise among any of the members of the congregation, or that any one should think he has suffered wrong from another, they shall first, according to the rule of our Lord, speak with each other in love, and seek to settle among themselves their differences; but if this should not have the desired effect, then the brother, who supposes himself injured, shall take with him some other brethren, whom he shall choose, and try to convince his brother; but if even thus the affair cannot be decided, then it is to be laid before the aforesaid committee, who are appointed by us as arbitrators, that they may examine into and decide the affair in a just and brotherly manner; and we bind ourselves jointly and severally to abide by their determination.

9. We will gladly aid and assist each other in our trades and businesses, and the committee is to be particularly attentive to the manner in which the brethren in trade carry on their business, that each member of the congregation act as is fitting for a brother who pro-

nesses to be a living member and follower of Jesus. And if found needful, a conference shall be kept with all those who carry on trades, or are in business, that evil may be prevented, and that we may assist each other to seek the fulfilment of the petition which we offer in the litany; "Bless the sweat of the brow, and faithfulness in our handicraft business, sanctify our commerce wholly unto Thee, that in no labour may be found the after-taste of sin."

10. As we ought always to acknowledge it with thanks unto God, when He supplieth us with work, and blesteth the work of our hands; so we will beg it of him as a grace, that, although we endeavour to maintain ourselves and families by our trades and businesses in a decent manner, the ungodly desire of gain, and of becoming rich, may never take place, but that each tradesman's principal view may be faithfully to serve his neighbour.

11. THOUGH even the temporal success in trade and commerce, and the establishing and preserving good credit and the custom of persons in business, dependeth on the one hand upon strictly seeing to it, that the goods be good, both as to the materials and the workmanship, and that, on the other hand, the prices be reasonable, and not raised above the value of them; yet faithfulness to our good Lord, and love to our fellow men, shall be the chief motive to render us strict and honest in our dealings.

12. SHOULD

12. SHOULD any one be found to act contrary to the above principles, or give any just occasion of complaint, of having in any ways injured his customers, by overcharging, or any want of faithfulness and integrity in his work, the committee is in all such cases and circumstances to make full enquiry into the matter, and, according to the circumstances, to admonish the offender, or to acquaint the Elder's Conference with the case, that, if he does not repent, and shew an amendment, he may be excluded the congregation.

13. TOWARDS apprentices, a master ought to act the part of a father, to bear with them as much as possible, and in case an apprentice behave in a manner that is unbecoming or hurtful, his master is not to act towards him precipitately, or in the heat of passion, but to weigh how he may be brought into a proper and happy course. A master ought to employ his apprentices carefully and diligently in working at the trade which they are to learn, and faithfully to teach them all the advantages peculiar to that trade, that thus, to the master's own satisfaction, good and useful tradesmen may be trained up.

AND lest apprentices, to their great detriment, should, during the years of their apprenticeship, lose again what they may have learned at school, the master will, out of love and faithfulness, appoint them some hours weekly, at the most convenient time, in order to employ them in the practice of writing and cyphering, that they may thereby also qualify themselves to carry on their trades
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to more advantage, after the years of their apprenticeships are over.

14. ALL our masters ought to be careful, that the work bespoke of them be always delivered at the time when they have promised it; on which account they will do well not to promise the work to be done but by such time as they are sure they can get it ready, saving unforeseen hinderances; and the journeymen, being brethren, will do their utmost to put it in the power of the master to keep his word.

15. OUR masters ought to consider their journeymen, be they brethren, or strangers, as assistants in their calling, to treat them in all things in a brotherly and kind manner, willingly and punctually to pay them the stipulated wages; and in case that their journeymen, who are brethren, should find reason to complain of the work, they are to speak with them about it in a friendly and convincing manner, so that it may find entrance, and the complaints be redressed.

16. WHAT has been observed above, Sect. VI. § 2. according to the apostle's rule, 1 Tim. vi. 2. viz. that brethren and sisters, who are in family service, ought, for this reason, because they stand with their superiors, in the unity of the faith, to be so much the more conscientious and irreproveable in the discharge of their duty towards them, this is also applicable to the journeymen who are brethren. Each of them ought to shew to his master, as to his superior, respect and obedience, faithfully, and as much as possible, to promote his interest,

terest, and to be willing to receive good advice and instruction.

17. SHOULD a journeyman, being a brother, contrary to our hope, discover in his master, being also a brother, a way of conducting his business that appears to him offensive and wrong, whether it may concern the materials of his work, or something else; in such a case, he is not to mention it to his master in a rude manner, and still less to speak evil of him to others, and to ruin his credit thereby; but, on the contrary, he ought to tell him his scruples and doubts in a modest manner, and if he cannot acquiesce in the explication given him, he is then to refer the matter to the Elder's Conference, or Committee.

C O N C L U S I O N.

1. No one shall for the future be received into this congregation, unless he previously acknowledge, and heartily consent to this our brotherly agreement touching all the established congregation principles and regulations, with a full intent and purpose to keep the same inviolably. To this end this brotherly agreement is to be laid before every one who desires to be received into the congregation, and is thought a fit candidate thereto, leaving him time to weigh, and thoroughly consider them, that thus he may be able to take his resolution accordingly, and with a clear understanding of, and full insight into, all those points, which the congregation has agreed and bound themselves unto.

2. ALTHOUGH

2. **ALTHOUGH** by the said agreement the different temporal ranks and stations, as ordained of God, shall not be infringed upon, but continue in their dignity; yet no person, of whatsoever rank and dignity he may be, can be received into the congregation, without adopting and observing these our congregation regulations and rules.

3. **IN** order to keep these congregation regulations in continual remembrance, they not only shall be printed, and a copy thereof, when printed, be delivered to each member of the congregation; but they shall also be read publicly in the congregation at least once a year.

4. **IF** in time to come, and for the good of the congregation, it should be thought necessary, on account of a change of circumstances, to make additions to, or alterations in, these congregation regulations; then such additions or alterations, when agreed unto, shall be of the same force, and equally binding, as though the same were, word for word, inserted into this brotherly agreement and compact.

Now whereas all the preceding declarations, regulations, rules and orders, as the foundation and summary of all our hitherto and lately renewed congregation constitution, were maturely weighed by the congregation council, together with all the labourers and servants of this congregation, and being thoroughly convinced of the expediency thereof; and whereas we have owned, received, and with sincere hearts adopted them;

THERE-

THEREFORE we promise to each other, for the sake of the Lord, and through his grace, unalterably to adhere to, and faithfully and conscientiously to abide by them.

WE do also by these presents empower the congregation direction, or Elder's Conference for the time being, to maintain the same sacredly, and without respect of persons, so that each and all the members of the congregation do act and live conformably thereto, and that all those, which should be so unfortunate as wilfully to act contrary to, or even to be unmindful of, these congregation principles, may be treated according to the rules and measures therein fixed and established.

ALL the above points were anew established, confirmed, and solemnly agreed unto, in and by the public congregation meeting at London, March the 10th, 1776.

Signed by Order of the said meeting,

John Church, sen. Secretary.

F I N I S.

Thereafter we promise to each other, for the sake of the Lord, and through his great goodness to assist to, and faithfully and conscientiously to abide by them.

We do so by these present covenants, and in a direct manner, as the Lord's Commandments for the maintenance of his laws, and without respect of persons, that each and all the members of the congregation do so, and live consistently therein; and that the whole, which should be to us a source of strength and comfort, to be ever in the remembrance of, and to be a guide to us, may be used according to the rule and measure therein fixed and established.

All the above points were now established, confirmed, and entered into, and by the public consent, at London, March the 10th, 1729.

Witness my hand and seal this 10th day of March.



